

## HINDUISM

### Introduction

Hinduism is one of the major religions of the world and the oldest. Hinduism embraces a god that is unknowable, a universe that is an illusion, and that all living things having a soul.

### Origin

Though the origin of Hinduism goes back to an ancient civilization in the Indus valley region of India anywhere from 4,000 to 2,200 B.C., much of its history is unknown and questioned.

It is known that the ancient religion of Vedism involving sacrifices and chanting came to the Indus valley around 1,500 B.C. and mixed with local native Indian beliefs that included reincarnation, many gods (polytheism), and the spiritual unity of humanity known as monism or 'one ultimate reality.' In time, what had been passed down as Hindu tradition was recorded as scriptures called Vedas. These scriptures were voluminous and consisted of:

### **The Veda**

Hindu wisdom or knowledge.

### **The Upanishads**

New mystical ideas about humanity and the universe, with the introduction of the concepts of the Brahman (self) and the atman (soul). Interestingly, these concepts influenced the founder of Buddhism.

### **The Ramayana**

24,000 couplets detailing the life of Rama, supposedly an incarnation of the god Vishnu.

### **The Mahabharata**

100,000 verses composed over an 800-year span describing the deeds of the Aryan clans.

## The Bhagavad Gita

This is the most sacred and most read of the Hindu books. Detailing man's duty, that if carried out would bring great sorrow, presents the concept of bhakti, devotion to a particular god as a means of salvation.

### Main Beliefs

Hinduism does not have a common belief system, but it does have main concepts that include:

An ultimate, impersonal god (Brahman) believed to be unknowable, as well as 330 million other gods.

There was no divinity that engineered creation but various types of pantheism (belief that all things compose an all-encompassing, immanent god) are embraced. Brahma alone exists and caused an illusion of creation for which there is no beginning or end. There are just endless cycles of creation and destruction.

Each human soul, known as an atman, is a manifestation of Brahman trapped in a physical body. Persons must live repeated lives or reincarnations in order for the soul to be liberated. Freedom from infinite being and self-realization of truth is our goal for existence.

What we are now is a result of our Karma (sin) in the previous life, either good or bad. If we have bad Karma, we will suffer in the present and the future until punished. We should always do good to be happy in the present and future.

There are multiple paths to god achieved by what we eat. Hindus believe that Lord Krishna shared – we become what we eat.

Parents, teachers, and food are next to god, giving us nurture and instilling values.

Lord Vishnu will reincarnate himself to save the earth, destroying evil and preserving good. It is believed that Vishnu has already been reincarnated 9 times and the 10<sup>th</sup> will come soon.

Destiny is shaped by the time of one's birth (horoscope).

A 'trinity' of Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu, and Lord Shiva.

## Demographics

There are almost a billion Hindu adherents in the world, 94% of which live in India, though followers can be found throughout the world. Here are percentages of Hindus in countries of the world:

Country	% of the population
Nepal	81
India	80
Mauritius	56
Guyana	29
Suriname	29
Trinidad and Tobago	29
United Arab Emirates	20
Qatar	20

Small percentages in the United Kingdom, the United States, and elsewhere.\*

## Closing Thoughts

Hinduism has no close association with Christianity. To compare Hinduism to other major religions, including the teachings of Jesus in Christianity, we invite you to explore [www.sourceoftruelife.com/Resources/ComparisonofReligions](http://www.sourceoftruelife.com/Resources/ComparisonofReligions)

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This is an introduction on the subject of **Hinduism**. Here are a few other resources you may wish to explore:

[What do Hindus believe? What is Hinduism? \(compellingtruth.org\)](http://compellingtruth.org)

[What is Hinduism and what do Hindus believe? | GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

[Hinduism - ReligionFacts](#)

[Hinduism - Origins, Facts & Beliefs - HISTORY](#)

\*[Demographics and Geography - Hinduism \(weebly.com\)](http://weebly.com)